

August 29, 2009 - Murtha Promises Grants for Tarentum Sewer, Water Upgrades

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U.S. Rep. John Murtha on Friday pledged \$300,000 in federal grant money for a sewer-line relocation project needed to accommodate Allegheny Ludlum's expansion plans.

Upper Allegheny Joint Sanitary Authority officials asked the Johnstown Democrat to provide the funding.

They have a verbal commitment from Allegheny County for about \$200,000 in additional money that it will take to complete the work along River Avenue just east of Mile Lock Lane near the Harrison-Brackenridge border.

"Can we come up with that?" Murtha asked an aide.

When told it wouldn't be a problem, a jovial Murtha told the officials, "There you go. That takes care of that problem."

Matthew Mazonkey, the congressman's spokesman, said the money would come through what's known as the "313" program. Mazonkey said the program is administered by the Army Corps of Engineers and provides grants for water and sewer projects.

Tarentum officials said they've been trying for a couple of years to get Murtha to visit the borough. One of their primary objectives yesterday was updating the congressman on efforts to mitigate Bull Creek flooding problems.

More than \$1 million in federal grant money is being used for flood-control efforts.

Borough officials also used the occasion to ask Murtha for money to support upgrades at the borough's water plant.

Borough Manager Bill Rossey said the plant's media filters and sludge-removal system need to be replaced. He asked Murtha for nearly \$700,000 for the work, saying the borough hasn't had success getting grants.

"We'll work it out," Murtha told Rossey.

Murtha warned that Tarentum might need to produce matching funds.

Rossey indicated he expected as much.

"We are willing to meet the match," he said.

In addition, Rossey asked the congressman to provide \$197,000 to buy a trailer that would be used to train firefighters.

Rossey described for Murtha a training program offered at Highlands High School that has helped area departments recruit junior firefighters.

In his pitch, Rossey told Murtha that having the trailer at the school would eliminate the need to send students to North Park or Pittsburgh for certain training exercises. He also told the congressman that area firefighters could use the trailer to train their members.

Murtha told Rossey that it's too late to get funding this year but that something could be done to help during the next budget cycle.